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Mrs Sarah Marshall
Headteacher
St Germans Primary School
Lower Fairfield
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Dear Mrs Marshall

Short inspection of St Germans Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You, your leaders and the newly established governing body are determined that all pupils receive the best possible education, and their welfare is at the heart of all that you do. Despite a period of staff turbulence, you have maintained high expectations of pupils' academic achievement. The local authority has supported the school well since the previous inspection. As a result, governance is more rigorous and teaching more effective.

Staff morale is good and there is a strong team approach to school improvement. Governors are knowledgeable, well informed and aspirational for the school and the wider community. As headteacher, you have developed the school's links with good and outstanding schools to enable you and your staff to benefit from high-quality training. These activities have strengthened leadership, improved teaching and ensured that most pupils achieve well.

You and your leadership team are clear about what is going well and what needs to be improved further. Together, you, your teachers and governors are tenacious in checking that the actions you have taken are making a positive difference to pupils' academic and personal development. For example, you identified that not enough pupils reached high enough standards in mathematics for two years and, with support from the local authority, took recent, rapid action to address this. Teachers now set more challenging work for pupils, allowing them to explain their thinking and methods. Pupils' progress and understanding are more effectively monitored so

that no pupils fall behind in their learning. However, the most able pupils are not yet challenged consistently enough across the school for them all to achieve the higher levels. Nevertheless, current pupils are achieving well this year and said that mathematics is a favourite subject. One pupil went on to add, 'Some of the assessments are hard and make us think, which is quite good.'

The previous inspection recommended that teachers should develop consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve and provide challenging learning activities. To this end, you have increased the level of challenge in lessons. Most pupils' attainment in 2017 in both key stages in reading and writing was in line with, or better than, expected standards nationally. The proportion of pupils reaching higher standards was in line with the proportion nationally at higher levels.

Another recommendation was to provide pupils with more frequent opportunities to improve their written work by using their writing skills in different subjects. While pupils now write for different purposes and use language well in different contexts, there are spelling and punctuation errors which go unchecked through the school.

You have taken effective action to ensure that all pupils follow the school's code of behaviour at all times. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary both inside and outside the classroom. The 'playground squad' supports younger pupils well, and pupils I spoke to said that there is very little boisterous or unkind behaviour in the school.

Parents and carers are positive about the school's work. They praise your approachability and that of your staff. They greatly value the school's caring and nurturing ethos, particularly when their children move mid-year from other schools. A typical comment is, 'My daughter loves school, wakes up happy and enjoys telling me what she has done every day.' Many parents clearly see the school as an important feature of their local community.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding because you, your staff and your governors give the safety of pupils a high priority. All staff and governors are appropriately trained in identifying possible signs of risk of harm. School records show that staff are up to date in their training in recognising the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. You are diligent in following statutory guidance for recruiting and vetting new staff.

The governor responsible for safeguarding takes the role seriously and ensures that leaders maintain the school's single central record accurately. Staff understand their safeguarding duties and pupils know how to keep themselves safe in school. As a consequence, pupils said that they feel safe, enjoy coming to school and trust the adults in the school to look after them. The strong emphasis you place on pupils' personal development ensures that they develop the skills they need to keep themselves safe when using modern technologies.

Governors also check that their policies and procedures work effectively and consult

staff about how they may make improvements. They have conducted a thorough annual safeguarding audit to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Inspection findings

- Pupils' rate of progress in mathematics has been lower than expected over the past couple of years, but there are signs of improvement. You and your mathematics subject leader have rightly targeted mathematics as a priority. With support from the local authority and other leaders, you have taken action to address progress in mathematics. A key part of your work has been to ensure that teachers closely check pupils' understanding and progress every term. This leads to teachers having better knowledge of the progress that individual pupils are making, in order to support their learning further.
- In response to disappointing results in 2017, leaders have been proactive in re-visiting and refreshing their approach to mathematics teaching. Pupils 'love mathematics' and said that they are 'good at it', as teachers 'teach in a way that we can understand and make it fun'. A new system of pupils evaluating their own learning has helped teachers identify where pupils are less confident and where a pupil's comprehension is secure. As a result, teachers are identifying pupils who need more challenge in lessons as well as helping others to catch up.
- While most current pupils are enjoying learning mathematics and making good progress, some groups of pupils, including the most able, are not challenged as stringently as they should be. You and your governors are continuing to monitor the teaching of mathematics to ensure that outcomes for all pupils are consistently good across the school.
- I evaluated how well different groups of pupils are progressing across the school, particularly in certain year groups. In the past, teachers' expectations have not been consistently high enough to ensure that pupils met the highest standards of which they are capable. Currently, all groups of pupils are making faster progress. For example, in mathematics, teachers present pupils with tasks that require them to think more deeply to solve problems at all levels. The governors are well aware of the groups of pupils you are targeting to do better. The progress of these pupils is now a point of discussion in governors' meetings in order to challenge school leaders on their achievement.
- I evaluated the effectiveness of the quality of the teaching of reading and writing, particularly for those pupils who did not reach the required standard in the phonics screening check in Year 2. Pupils read well and are being motivated and encouraged to read for a variety of purposes. Teachers structure the daily guided reading sessions so that adults can provide effective support for those pupils who are falling behind. You use the pupil premium funding particularly effectively to improve the skills of those who find reading difficult. They make good progress as they move through key stage 2.
- When evaluating how well pupils are progressing in their writing, it was apparent that they do not always gain writing skills in a coherent and logical progression. Teachers have a good understanding of how to build writing sequences for their

classes. They challenge pupils to write for a variety of reasons, which is helping them to gain confidence and to deepen their skills. However, these skills do not consistently transfer to high-quality pieces of extended writing. For example, there are times when pupils are held back because inconsistencies in spelling, punctuation and grammar are not challenged. Pupils are not supported consistently enough to make the best use of their editing skills to evaluate and then improve the quality of their writing.

- The inspection evaluated the safety of pupils moving around the school, persistent absences of some pupils and the school's safeguarding culture. Pupils enjoy playing safely and supportively with their friends in the playground, showing high levels of respect for staff and each other. They move around the school in an orderly manner and understand that class and school rules are in place to help keep them safe. Persistent absence has reduced considerably.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- monitor the teaching of mathematics rigorously to ensure that pupils' learning and achievement continue to improve
- ensure that pupils gain writing skills in a coherent and logical progression
- improve pupils' editing skills to correct punctuation, grammar and spelling in their writing, particularly in extended writing.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cornwall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Jane
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We agreed the timetable and activities at the start of the inspection. I worked extensively with you, reviewing pupils' books and progress. Together, we visited all classes across the school. We scrutinised a sample of pupils' workbooks and I spoke with pupils in line with our agreed lines of enquiry. Two members of the governing body, including the chair, met with me to discuss actions taken since they had taken up their posts, and their aspirations for the school's future. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I looked at a range of school documents including those relating to safeguarding, the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation, and governors' minutes. I took full account of the 40 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as other surveys, including the 26 free-texts received for the inspection.